

HELL WORLD



A CHIHIRO FUJISAKI FANZINE

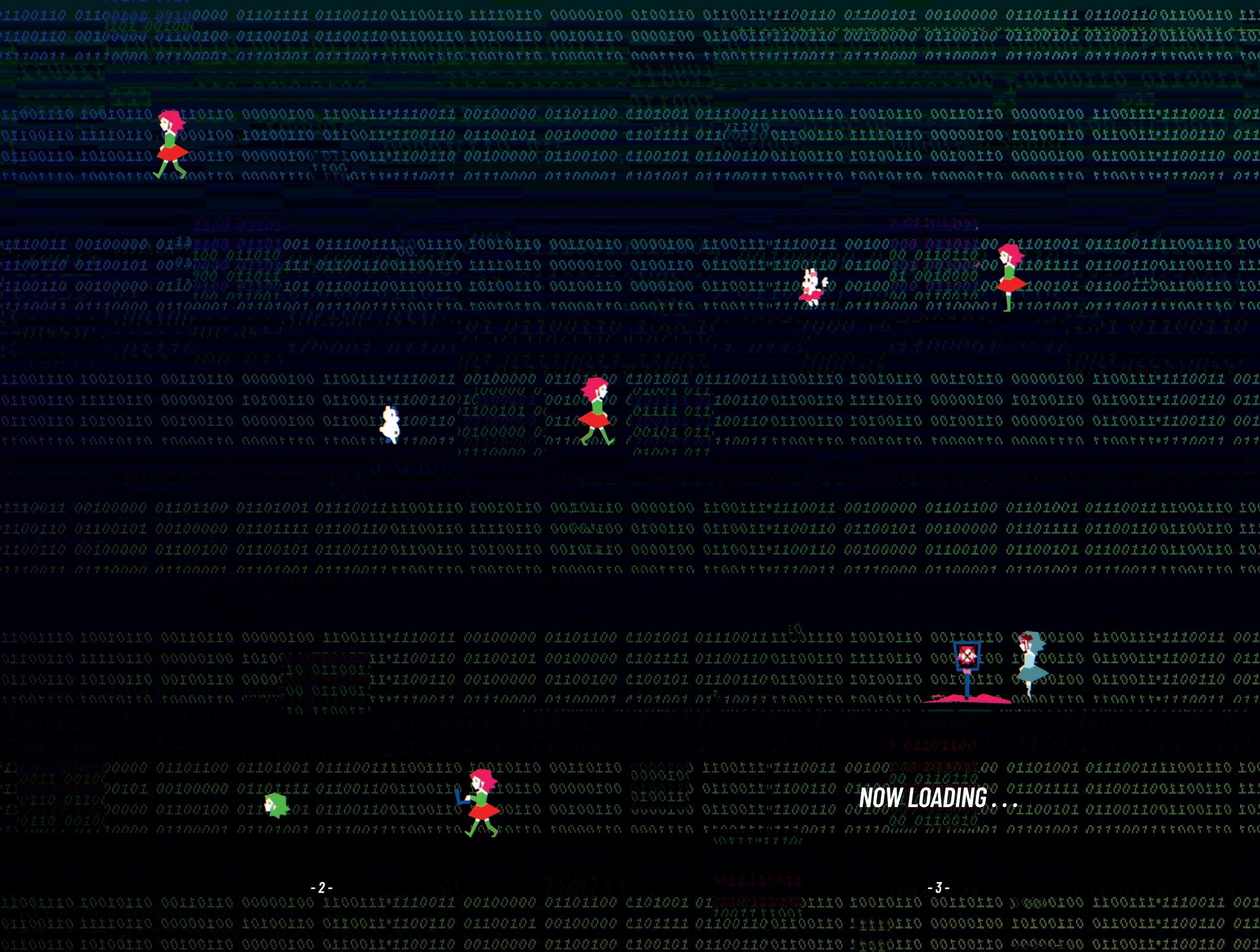


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thank
for



LOADING COMPLETE.

STARTING PROGRAM NOW_





ULTRA DESPAIR BROS.

WRITTEN BY: ALYN
ILLUSTRATED BY: PANCAKEMO

They hated to admit it, but Chihiro was running out of leads, their investigation through Towa City's apocalyptic terrain proving unsuccessful. They were almost glad for the diversion when another survivor from Class 78 sent a message over their handheld PDAs requesting help locating a Demon Hunting target.

Branded "Gontakerus" by the Warriors of Hope, he was spotted near Towa Library. Chihiro slipped through the building's side door and tracked new footprints in the fine layer of dust coating the floor. The library was eerily still, a few desks piled high with newspapers and magazines, every headline about the Tragedy. Chihiro shuddered seeing their own name in print with five others who'd survived the killing game from half a year ago.

A *thud* snapped Chihiro to attention. Scanning their surroundings, Chihiro glimpsed a Monokuma clumsily bumping into a table on the other side of the room, unaware it was being watched but still so *dramatic*. Chihiro rolled their eyes and reached for their hacking gun—



"Don't!" a voice hissed. Before they could locate the source, someone pulled them between two bookshelves.

"You insane?" a scowling boy scolded. Chihiro gaped at the face they recognized from photographs as Takemichi Yukimaru, interim leader of the Crazy Diamonds, and right-hand-man of Mondo Owada.

He was prettier in person, with tousled hair and sharp, calculating eyes. He was also shorter than they'd expected, but *not* to be overlooked; where Mondo was hotheaded, Takemichi was reportedly collected and inflexible.

But all Chihiro remembered was that brave boy who'd wanted so badly to live. Who'd throttled Monokuma at the first sign of danger, who'd pounded on bolted-up windows, who'd paled only at the sight of a secret worth dying for. Every day now, Chihiro fought to conjure memories of their school, as painful as it was, for even a moment more with Mondo.



Takemichi's scrutinizing frown deepened. "You can't use a megaphone—there's one of those alarm bastards in here."

A siren in a hushed library...were the Monokuma kids trying to flush Takemichi out of hiding? "Can you show me?"

Takemichi appraised Chihiro, untrusting, but ultimately decided to take their gloved hand and lead them to a vantage point between shelves. There, they saw the hazardous siren Monokuma wandering amongst romance novels. (If there was more time, maybe they could've found books by the late Toko Fukawa.)

Takemichi muttered, "If it was just the regular punks, I could take 'em out myself." His possessive grip on

a metal baseball bat tightened.

"Let me handle this, Yukimaru," Chihiro whispered. He stiffened at his name, but Chihiro was already swapping truth bullets and taking aim.

"DANCE!"

In the ensuing burst of pink, the siren Monokuma shimmied and shook while its alarm blared, attracting every other Monokuma in the vicinity. Startlingly, four others had been lurking—but they flipped back to the *Break* function and attacked with blue shots, saving the boogieing bear for last.

Once it lay inactive, Chihiro became aware of Takemichi's gaze.

"Um, Yukimaru, I actually came here to talk to you..." they babbled nervously. "I promise it's not bad! I just want to bring you somewhere safe so you—"

"You're with that Future Foundation, then," Takemichi concluded, scoffing. "That explains the weapon. Yeah, I've heard it all before. Everyone still kicking in this godforsaken city is convinced you guys'll swoop in to save the day. Fuck that. If Future Foundation had an *ounce* of strength, you would've charged into that murder school and stopped Junko Enoshima before any of this shit happened, before—!" Takemichi stopped, sensing he was losing his cool.

It was impressive he dared say the name of Ultimate Despair herself—most were afraid to invoke it, these days—much less spit it with such venom. But they knew who he was vicious on behalf of.

"I never introduced myself," Chihiro began again. "I'm not here on behalf of Future Foundation. My name is Chihiro Fujisaki, the Ultimate Programmer."

The enraged flush drained from Takemichi's features. "...Fujisaki?" He reached out a hand, as if to prove they were not a ghost—but then flinched back.

"The reports said your class's memories were altered. How do you know me?" Observant and unapologetic in his questioning—Kyoko Kirigiri would've appreciated his investigative mind.

Chihiro explained, "The kids who overran Towa are hunting hostages of Class 78's killing game. You were... Mondo Owada's chosen loved one." Chihiro didn't feel half worthy of saying his name. "My friends and I received information and tech from Future Foundation, but we're to help of our own volition."

Takemichi sighed loudly, resolute. “Fine. I’ll go with you—they already found me. Anyways, I’d rather travel with someone who can hold their own, over risking it alone.”

Chihiro froze, baffled to have swayed the stubborn biker—and that he *trusted* Chihiro to have his back!

“You coming, Fujisaki?” Takemichi called, already heading for the exit.

“Uh—yes!” They scurried to catch up.

Outside, Takemichi walked like he owned the streets, while Chihiro subtly signaled which turns would take them to the Towa Underground entrance. From there, they could follow the subway lines to the secret base that sheltered Towa’s citizens. Everyone would be relieved to have another Demon Hunting target securely in their care. Then, Chihiro would resume their search...

“How does the memory shit work?” Takemichi asked suddenly.

“Eh?”

“How do you lose, what, three years of memory?” he elaborated, disgruntled.

Chihiro huffed, amused. “I was focused on the killing game, so I wasn’t trying to look for inconsistencies. In the months since, I’ve been able to recover fragments of memories...Say, did we ever meet before, Yukimaru?”

Takemichi avoided their gaze. “No. But Mondo talked about you. Before the world went to shit.”

Chihiro wanted to probe, but then their eyes caught on glinting metal in their periphery: a broken-off length of chain wrapped around a lamppost, like a dog had gotten loose...

Before they could stop themselves, Chihiro was rushing towards it. They called backwards: “Sorry! I have to do something quickly! The subway is two blocks down—I’ll join you soon!”



Down a side street, the sounds of a brawl grew cacophonous, which meant either a hellish volume of Monokumas, or—



One of the Warriors of Hope’s mecha suits, the Sage Robot, was unleashing destruction upon an intersection. Chihiro ducked behind an abandoned car to avoid flying debris. In the chaos, they spied the mecha’s enemy: a single girl, attacking with a gleaming spear. She moved like lightning, feinting away from the robot’s grasp and plunging her weapon into the crook of its elbow, sparks spraying.

“Who...who the hell is that?” A panting Takemichi had caught up to Chihiro. They would’ve admonished him to go somewhere safe, but they knew what it was to be underestimated, so they held off.

“That’s Mukuro Ikusaba,” they answered.

“The Ultimate Despair?” Takemichi screeched.

“Ultimate *Soldier*,” Chihiro corrected. “She was nearly killed by her sister, so she fought back.”

Back then, it was lucky Makoto Naegi saved her from the trap in the gymnasium. Mukuro had never believed her sister could *really* hurt her, but that betrayal was what turned the tides of their killing game—and Mukuro—against despair.

Although, Despair wouldn’t leave her be. As Mukuro circled the mecha and took aim, a shadowy figure behind her brandished a blade—

Instantly, Chihiro flipped on their hacking gun. “**MOVE!**” Green light shot at the car in front of them, its forgotten engine roaring to life. It sped towards the assailant and sent him skittering away, while the soldier was



busy burying her spear beneath the Sage Robot's shoulder blade.

From wherever the Sage himself was watching, he opted to cut his losses and flee, his mecha retreating away. Mukuro pursued, but not before calling to her classmate: "Nice aim, Chi! Thanks for the assist!"

And then, she bolted away. Chihiro briefly glowed in the soldier's praise.

"Holy shit," Takemichi blurted. "Did you kill that guy over there?!"

"Huh? No—I'm sure he's fine!" Chihiro picked their way towards the car, now smashed against a crumbling building.

"You threw a car at him!"

Thankfully, the crushed rubble shifted, and a mitted hand poked out. Chihiro shifted some of the pieces away and helped the man stand. "Here—I've got you, Komaeda!"



Nagito Komaeda was taller than the other two, and willowy. An unfinished braid stuck out amidst his cloud of insipid hair, and his unobscured hand was dotted with marker doodles, like he was a giant doll for villainous kids. Most notably, he wore a collar with a long chain matching the links Chihiro spied earlier. This man—this Remnant of Despair—was part of Chihiro's true goal.

He lit up with recognition, though they'd never met. "Ah, thank you, Fujisaki! Apologies—you may know, but I am Servant to the Warriors of Hope, so of course, I needed to at least *attempt* to stop Ikusaba...but alas, the rays of hope from the Ultimates are just too bright for someone like me to dim."

Takemichi cleared his throat. "Not gonna lie, I didn't understand a goddamn word of that."

Nagito's stormcloud eyes cut to him, disdainful. "It can't be helped, of the talentless."

Takemichi scoffed, unimpressed.

"Komaeda—" Chihiro started.

"Of course, Fujisaki, I'm sure you'd like to get on with it. Someone so gentle must hate to dirty your hands, extinguishing a pitiful despair like myself."

"What?" Chihiro spluttered. "I'm not here to *kill* you!"

"I still wouldn't call them gentle," Takemichi warned, idly swinging his bat. "They *did* almost run you over."

Nagito raised a skeptical eyebrow. "Please enlighten me, then: why have the Remnants of Despair been vanishing since your game's end?"

Cautiously, Chihiro reiterated, "We're not killing Remnants—we're giving them a chance. *That's* what I came here for. Take this." From their pocket, Chihiro pulled a skeleton key to hand to Komaeda. "Mukuro said I should return this: it's for that collar Enoshima locked you in."

Nagito stared at the key, apprehensive. "...You're setting me free? How do I repay you?"

"Please consider my offer: I want to protect you and your former classmates, and help you heal. But to combat despair, you have to *choose* to change. Enoshima never gave you a choice, but I will."

"How hopeful..." Nagito murmured.

"It's not hope I have," Chihiro replied firmly. "It's *belief*—that if we come together, this world can recover. That it's possible to change for the better. In my darkest time, I was given my friends, who I learned to trust in. And now, after everything, I finally believe in my own strength—so you can believe in me, too."

For the first time, Nagito looked solemn. Chihiro said their piece, so they turned to Takemichi, who was grinning wickedly.

"He was right," Takemichi proclaimed. "When Mondo said he was actually making *friends* with the talented jerks at that school, I wasn't convinced, but I get it now. I've seen with my own eyes the big-hearted programmer he said is crazy enough to shine with the Diamonds."

Stunned, Chihiro squeaked, "Mondo...said that?"

Takemichi nodded. "Sure did. Hey, Fujisaki—I'd like to offer myself as someone you can believe in, too. I'll come with you on your mission."

"You mean that? We could still go to the shelter."

"Nah. I've always felt safest with my gang. Whatever's next for you, I've got your back, Boss."

Chihiro beamed, feeling tears well. It had been a long road here, and it wasn't over yet, but they were on their way to being the person Mondo knew they could be.

"Excuse me." Nagito had removed his collar, now clutched tightly in his hands. "...I would also like to assist you, if I may."

"I would be happy to have your help—as Komaeda, not a servant," Chihiro clarified. "See, there's another Remnant here, but I can't seem to find any sign of him..."

The biker and the Remnant followed dutifully behind their leader as Chihiro guided them through the wreckage of Towa City.







THIS IS WHAT YOU GET

WRITTEN BY: PSYCHICCUPID

ILLUSTRATED BY: POODS

There's a numbness that Chihiro feels. It's uncanny, *wrong*, their head is supposed to hurt right now—*really* badly—but instead, there is nothing. Just a throbbing that *should* be something. Why? W-Why!?

...

Everything clicks when they finally register their lifeless corpse on the ground. From the neck down, everything is as it should be, but a bright pinkness obscures their head, staining their once-hazel locks into a disgusting mish-mash brown. Overwhelming grief surrounds the body: Mondo stares, his entire self frozen, not even breathing. His eyes are glossy, not filled with the fire and rage there only moments ago. The only sign that he is still alive comes from his shaking fists—dumbbell still in hand—before he finally drops it. He tears down the room's poster, curls up the bloody rug, and flings a lifeless Chihiro over his shoulder with an eerie stoicism. Over a few minutes, he rearranges both rooms and leaves Chihiro on the floor of the girl's room—keeping his promise—and runs away in a silent panic.

Only in their solitude does Chihiro get to process everything that just happened, beginning to cry and fold in on themselves. Only in their solitude does Chihiro accept that this is what they get for trying to be brave. Only in their solitude does Chihiro realize—they're not actually alone?

A giggle makes them stand up straight, acting like they had never crumpled to begin with.

"I believe you're the first one to cry after seeing their dead body. I suppose that's only fitting," Sayaka—*Sayaka*—says, walking up from behind to place a hand on Chihiro's shoulder. "I'm really sorry he hurt you, Chihiro."

It's okay, he didn't



mean it, thinks Chihiro, but they can't seem to vocalize it. Only mumbles and sobs leave their mouth as their now ghostly arms come up to attempt to clean their face. The numbness has yet to leave, but Sayaka's hand is *warm*, comforting. Chihiro leans into it until they're finally able to get themselves under control.

Once the tears have dried up and their breathing is regulated, Sayaka lets them go. The loss of stability does not go unnoticed by Chihiro, but with their newfound serenity, the braveness they had at the end of their life returns. Taking a deep, steady inhale, they look at their body and the bloody weapon next to it, and then change their attention to Sayaka before gasping.

An awful wound displays itself proudly in her stomach, and she is still covered in blood, but she smiles all the same. Behind her, Leon is barely recognizable with the amount of bruises that cover his body, and then there is... Mukuro.



W-Wait... how does Chihiro know that name!? Blinking a few times, Chihiro tries to recall more information, but that's it... *Mukuro*

Ikusaba with her short black hair, expressionless demeanor, and many holes from pointy spikes coming out of her body.

Chihiro had been the one watching her after she died. At the time, she had blond hair and called herself—

Just then, Byakuya enters the room with his usual confident smile and aura, though it feels...malicious this time around. Without hesitating, he grabs Chihiro—the physical, dead Chihiro—and strings them up. Of course, on instinct, Chihiro murmurs, “H-Hey, what are you doing?” but knows that he can't hear them after the words have left.

Despite their clear panic, the other ghosts act unaffected, watching on. Leon mumbles, “Pompous ass,” but continues to observe. Something about the three's lackadaisical nature strikes something in Chihiro, and they bottle the panic deep within themselves to take a step forward, aiming to grab Byakuya by the arm. When their hand phases through, however, that panic erupts again, shaking them to their core.

“I can't do anything.” The words leave their mouth uncontrollably. The ghosts seem to agree, having experienced this before. Chihiro should be used to helplessness, *is* used to helplessness, but it stings more now than it used to. Maybe it's because these people are their friends! Uh, well, Chihiro thinks they are. They feel like they are? No. Wait. Chihiro has only known these people for a week, right?

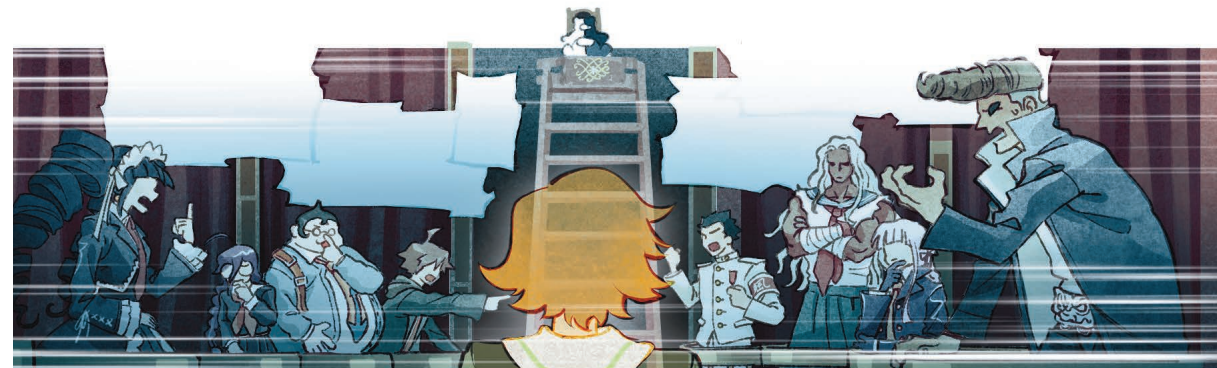
Why is the numbness throbbing even more?

Byakuya finishes his writing on the wall and the pulsing fades just in time for Chihiro to watch him leave with a satisfied smile. *Why...!?* Knowing they won't get an answer, they leave the room, no longer needing those contrived e-Handbooks as they phase through the door. The others follow almost aimlessly, but with the dead looks in all of their eyes, Chihiro can't imagine what the past few nights have been like for them.

Surprisingly, they all go to their rooms, even if Mukuro's is wrong, and lay down. Some semblance of humanity, Chihiro supposes. But again, as they float over their bed instead of laying on it proper, Chihiro weeps and weeps. *I'm weak. I'm so weak...*

They think this all through the body discovery, all through the trial: weakly watching as they're felt up and proclaimed a boy, as everyone switches pronouns on a dime. When Monokuma tells everyone their story, Chihiro relives the words that got them killed only hours ago—how *strong* and cool they were then—and finds them inspiring, as if someone else is speaking them. And perhaps they *were* someone else then, because as the story shifts from theirs to Mondo's, they feel their own weak heart shatter harder than it ever has.

It hurts to hear Taka scream, and even as a ghost, Chihiro screams, too. The others don't join them, but that's okay! Chihiro begs and begs for Mondo not to be killed, to let him live and grow strong for the both of them, but he is still turned to butter, and despair takes over the living.



A figure rises from the motorcycle inside the cage, and a gloomy, drooping Mondo makes his way over.

He looks angry, livid. He walks right up to Monokuma and screams a battle roar when his fist doesn't connect with that stupid bear. It's so loud, *too loud*, with Taka and Mondo both hollering, and Chihiro doesn't even listen to Byakuya's whatever excuse for what he did—instead running right up to that melting Mondo and giving him a giant hug to hide all of the tears that Chihiro leaves in his jacket. *“I'm so sorry!”*

What they expect is more yelling, more punching, but Mondo quiets down, finally taking in the world around him, and he just mutters, “What the fuck could *you* ever be sorry for?”



“I made you angry. I-I made you feel *weak*...” Silence follows as Chihiro’s voice fades out, and all they’re met with is Mondo’s melting head shaking back and forth.

However, before he can say anything more, he looks up to see the other ghosts... and promptly freaks out, falling back and landing on nothing. Chihiro immediately extends their hand to help, and they notice Mondo’s eyes fly up to their wound, then analyzes all of the others. “Man. We all got fucked up, didn’t we?” He, surprisingly, takes Chihiro’s hand, and stands up—it takes absolutely no effort to do so; he is weightless. Woah.



Even more weightless, though, is when Mondo himself returns the earlier hug, clearly cradling Chihiro’s cranium that he crushed. No apologies leave his mouth at this time, but Chihiro feels them, and returns the gesture with the same *strength* and intensity.

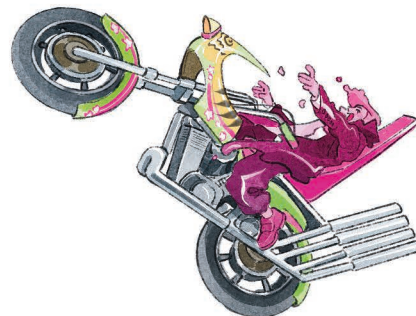
And like that, they live their lives as ghosts. While Taka has his breakdown, Mondo desperately tries to talk to him, to no avail. When Taka dies, he’s relieved and finally calmed down, not even sure what’s happened to him, not even seeing it. It’s the first time Chihiro sees *any* sense of color come back to Mondo’s pale face. They can’t help but smile, despite everything.



Hifumi joins shortly after, and the poor man looks miserable, lost. As he sees his dead classmates, he promptly screams, and it takes considerable effort to calm him down. But... *Yasuhiro*. Taeko. They all heard him, all of the *ghosts* recognized the name and what he was trying to say. So far, no one has questioned Mukuro. So far, no one has called Celeste ‘Celeste.’

So far, none of them are brave enough to ask where *one classmate has gone off to*, even though they all know the answer.

Out of everyone dead, Chihiro, Taka, and Hifumi all wear matching head wounds, and Taeko rises from her ashes looking a lot like Mondo, though scarier. There’s a porcelain plate covering her face that has melted entirely, much like her gothic clothes. Chihiro yearns for all of them, for a time before all this. A time before *her*.



Life returns to normal for a couple of days in between each murder. As more ghosts appear, the more they have fun and explore the school. Because there are little restrictions, being dead, the eight of them have gotten into a routine of working out together in a group. It’s nice. *Really* nice. But Sakura joins them way too quickly, way too tragically.



The trial is so hard to watch. All the ghosts are yelling at everyone to get a grip, many of them desperately try to tell Aoi she’s wrong. This includes Chihiro, holding up a ghostly copy of the note and begging her to see that it’s fake, thinking maybe *this* time their words will cut through.



Luckily for all of them, Makoto sees through everything like he always has, finding the truth. He fills Chihiro with so much hope that it’s unbearable sometimes. Then Chihiro watches in absolute horror—an audible shriek leaving their lungs—as Alter Ego is smashed to bits... and no presence comes to join the living, causing despair to overtake them once again while they meander back to their rooms.



Nine ghosts occupy Hope’s Peak now, but Chihiro can feel so many others. Echoes and whispers are heard around every corner, scaring them. They feel like they should remember *something*, but all that remains is a sting whenever they listen to the sounds for too long. So, they don’t.

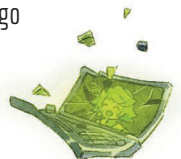


Instead, they watch with all the others as the mastermind makes her entrance, bashing Makoto’s skull, throwing Mukuro’s body to the wolves, all under the guise of a mask. The other ghosts make their opinions known: Leon and Mondo’s words are aggressive. Taeko screams and shouts obscenities that Celeste never would’ve. Sayaka seems to study *her* ruthlessly and Mukuro—

Well, Mukuro just seems tired, like she’s used to this. Even now.

Chihiro doesn’t know how they feel.

It’s easy to get angry, to *hate*, yet not a single flicker of rage fuels their movements. The other ghosts are overwhelmingly upset about the unfair trial, Mukuro especially. For the first time, she shows emotion, rushing to save Makoto even though it’s impossible. Through tears, Chihiro clamps their hands and prays to anyone and anything to protect him, and yet when Alter Ego answers, Chihiro takes no credit for the life that is saved.



Tensions only grow worse from there. At this point, most ghosts spend their time following *her* relentlessly, desperate. Everyone tries to stop her, but to no avail.

Hours and hours go by until the entire courtroom is drowning in despair, and Chihiro is the only one silent. The living ask their questions, the dead, united, seek their answer. And then? There is hope. Finally, *hope!* It's so beautiful that Chihiro stands by Makoto's side as he becomes the Ultimate Hope, shining brighter than ever before.

Eventually, as six stand before a metal door, a figure cloaked in evil shadow peeks from the rubble of her death. She is nothing but despair, completely and totally. Her presence is stunning, disgusting. All of the emotions and talk of before dissipate completely.

Finally, *finally*, after all this time as a ghost, Chihiro knows how they feel.

Walking up to the horrid monster, they stick out their small, loving hand. Not all is forgiven, but Chihiro just wants to heal. "Welcome home, Junko."







Hey! That was mine, Mukuro!



I'M LATE! PLEASE ACCEPT MY SINCEREST APOLOGIES!!

GUH!

Kiyotaka Ishimaru joined.



It's punishment time for Taka~! Puhuhu~



Are you in, Chihiro?

Sorry, I'm still choosing my character.

No worries, take your time.



You snooze you lose.

YO GUYS WHAT'S UP?!

Oh my god. We seriously need to get Mondo a new mic.



BY ANY OTHER NAME

WRITTEN BY: GLOWNARY

ILLUSTRATED BY: LAV

Each venue larger than the last, each crowd more deafening. But neither the overbearing stage lighting nor the massive cheering crowd can make the idol sweat. If she's nervous at all, it'll never show.

She's a solo act, so she makes use of the full stage; dancing back and forth, making heart shapes with her hands and waving to the audience.

Then, a fan in the front row throws a flower onto the stage—a single red rose. It isn't the first time someone has tossed her a gift mid-concert, and it surely won't be the last, but this rose in particular is headed straight for her. She makes no attempt to dodge, continuing to execute her dance routine flawlessly. It flies closer, until—

Nothing hits her. The rose soars directly through the mirage of her stomach; her holographic visage flickers for just a moment as the flower distorts the projection and lands on the ground behind her.

The crowd doesn't react. After all, they already know that AE-chan isn't real.

Backstage, Chihiro takes a deep breath before chugging a water bottle. The stationary microphone on her desk is turned off, now, and the monitors blink and hum from prolonged use. There's no more need for vocal input, but the show isn't over—she sets the bottle down before pressing a few buttons, making the hologram onstage do a delicate curtsy. The idol smiles and waves until the curtain finishes its descent, at which point Chihiro exits the program. Just like that, AE-chan ceases to exist.

I should be happy, Chihiro thinks. Tonight's concert was perfect. What do I have to complain about?

But she already knows what's wrong.

AE-chan has sparkly eyes, perfectly smooth skin, and a programmed peppy demeanor. She wears frilly dresses and cute, girly accessories. Her voice doesn't shake when she sings in front of an audience.

But Chihiro, in her ponytail and slacks and dress shirt, is somehow both too feminine to be a boy and too masculine to be a girl.

"Are you playing dress-up...? You're a boy, Chihiro. Skirts are for girls."

"Your voice is so high-pitched, you sound like a girl."

"You look just like your father."

Her androgynous voice was something of a blessing, despite the many jabs she received about it—after a bit of training behind closed doors, she could easily swap between high and low, feminine and masculine.

Even the staff at the concert venue don't know her true role—to them, Chihiro's just another stage tech assisting the idol.

Only a handful of people know that she's the voice behind the performer. Most of them, she had only told out of

necessity; when the Hope's Peak Academy talent recruitment team reached out with an invitation to attend as the Ultimate Idol, she'd had to request a cover talent for her privacy.

Her parents know as well. They were a little confused at first, but ultimately very supportive of her feminine interests. Sometimes, though, she wonders if they would still be supportive if they knew that her femininity was more than a hobby. She likes to think they would be, but there's always a small, nagging voice in the back of her mind that says otherwise.

And then there's Sayaka.

The two of them had met as children, during a youth career day at her dad's tech company. It was before Chihiro had obtained control over her pitch, back when it was a little too high all the time. Sayaka, with her slightly messy hair and too-big laptop, was the first person to ever compliment her voice.

"Like an anime character," she had said with a toothy grin. *"Or a Vocaloid!"*

Sayaka's the one who programmed the hologram. She's the one who smiled brightly when Chihiro nervously suggested that AE-chan should be a girl. She's

the one who helped her design cute, girly outfits for the avatar.

She's the one that Chihiro wants to tell first.

Chihiro struggles to fall asleep that night, her mind racing as she thinks about what she's going to say. Sayaka will take it well, right? There's no reason to believe she wouldn't. It's just... terrifying, to finally say it out loud.

Anxiety keeps her up late. In the morning, she groans upon realizing she's overslept. She might not love wearing them, but at least her "boy" clothes are quick and easy to put on. She rolls out of bed, gets dressed, and rushes to class.

Attendance isn't actually required at Hope's Peak; as long as you spend enough time on "talent development," the faculty are extremely lax about tardiness and absences. Despite that, Chihiro instinctively apologizes to every teacher she sees on her way in today.

Sayaka attends class somewhat regularly. *"Because laptops and phones are portable,"* she would say with a giggle. Her eyes are always glued to a screen, if she can help it.

When Chihiro reaches their shared classroom, she just barely peeks her head in. She feels guilty enough for being late—if anyone notices her showing up and then immediately dipping upon confirming Sayaka's absence, she'd never live it down.

...If they cared. Still, it's important to *her*.

Sayaka is, in fact, absent. When she's not in class, she's usually in the computer lab. Thankfully, none of Chihiro's classmates seem to notice her presence. She spins around, eager to move on—

"Does someone need to invite you in?"

Chihiro freezes at the sound of Junko's voice. Of all the people she could run into right now, it had to be Junko. Chihiro's uneasy at best around the Ultimate Detective on an average day; she has cold, calculating eyes that seem to peer right through her, and an inclination towards using her talent to dig up hot gossip. Today is even worse than usual, given the secret at the forefront of Chihiro's mind.

"Um." Chihiro shifts her weight nervously. "I was just going to the bathroom?"

Junko giggles as though Chihiro just told a funny joke. "Riiiiight, the bathroom. Of course! You just needed to creep around the classroom like a lost puppy first. I get you."

"Attendance isn't mandatory." Chihiro's voice drops to a half-whisper as she stares down at her shoes.

"Oh, def. I mean, I'm not going either, girl." Junko has a tendency to call her *girl*, and she struggles not to flinch every time. She says it like it doesn't mean a thing, like it's just slang—yet she doesn't say it to the boys. Just to Chihiro. "But I'm not the one creeping at the door, y'know?"

Uncertain of what else to do, Chihiro sighs and looks up, not quite making eye contact. "I was just looking for Maizono-san. Have you seen her today?"

For a split second, Junko genuinely seems surprised that she asked. It's quickly replaced with boredom as she studies her immaculate fake nails, no longer sparing Chihiro her attention. "That one, hmm... Nope! Buuut, you know she's always got her head in the digital clouds."

Junko's sudden lack of interest is a relief. Chihiro brightens up a bit, eager to get away. "Right, that's what I figured. I'll just be on my way, then..."

It seems like Junko is going to let her go without another word, until

she pipes up again while Chihiro is already walking away. "Your shirt is inside-out, by the way."

Sure enough, when Chihiro looks down, her button-up shirt is inside-out. Embarrassment floods her body, her cheeks turning pink. "Oh. Um, thanks for telling me."

"It's whatever." Junko tosses her ponytail over her shoulder as she turns to leave. "Boys are always committing crimes against fashion, anyways."

She walks off, leaving Chihiro to stand there with those words gnawing at the pit of her stomach.

After a quick stop to the boy's bathroom to fix her shirt, Chihiro finally makes it to the computer lab. Her brief conversation with Junko is starting to eat at her. What if Sayaka is sick today, and she skipped class for no reason?

But the moment she opens the door, her concerns melt away. Sayaka's fingers fly across the keyboard with intense concentration. Whatever she's working on, she's too focused to notice Chihiro's presence. Cute clips adorn her hair and prevent her bangs from falling into her eyes while she works. Despite her slightly disheveled appearance, Chihiro has



always admired her femininity.

“Sayaka,” Chihiro calls out, her voice jumping in pitch now that they’re alone together. Sayaka’s head whips towards the sound.

“Chihiro!” She leaps up from her seat, clapping her hands together. “I didn’t expect to see you here so early. Hold on, I have something for you!”

“You do?” Chihiro’s eyes widen.

“Mhm!” She watches as Sayaka reaches for something hidden behind the clunky monitor—a bouquet of flowers. Yellow roses, lotuses, gladioluses... she wonders if Sayaka got them from Makoto, the Ultimate Gardener. “Congrats on the big show! It was unbelievable seeing AE-chan on a stage that huge, and you did an amazing job.”

Chihiro gratefully accepts the bouquet. “Thank you...! I couldn’t have done it without your programming!”

“Aww, it was nothing,” Sayaka dismisses with a wave of her hand. Wistful, she continues, “Your singing voice is the real draw, you know? Oh, and I’m happy to see you, but—aren’t you normally in class right now?”

Chihiro pushes her glasses up anxiously. “I guess I could have done this after school, but I would’ve been distracted all day. I really, really need to tell you something.”

“Oh!” Sayaka meets her gaze with curiosity. “Sure, what’s up?”

“You know how I asked you to make AE-chan a girl...?”

Sayaka’s eyes light up immediately. “*Chihiro!* Ohmigosh, this is so exciting! Wait, wait, ignore me, I should let you say it first. Ahh!” She reaches out to grab her friend’s hand, and Chihiro can’t help but laugh with pure joy.

“Sayaka, I think... No, I guess I know it. I’m a girl.”

“I’m so happy for you,” Sayaka gushes. “Here, let me just...” She trails off, silently reaching for one of her hair clips and removing it from her bangs. She reaches out and gently pushes Chihiro’s hair back, clipping her bangs in place for her. “There. A gift for the new you.”

“Sayaka! You already gave me a gift,” Chihiro says, gesturing to the bouquet. “I can’t take another one...”

“Different occasions,” Sayaka dismisses. “The flowers were for the concert. This is for girlhood. Totally different, see?”

“...I guess you’re right,” Chihiro responds. She catches sight of herself in the dull reflection of a computer monitor and can’t help but smile. With the pin in her hair and the flowers clutched over her chest, she thinks for a split second that she can see AE-chan.

No, she realizes. I can see me.

“Maybe one day, you can perform onstage without the hologram,” Sayaka suggests. “Her outfits were designed to look good on you! We’ll just have to make them for real.”

“Ahh, I don’t know...” The tips of Chihiro’s ears go pink at the thought. “Even if I start dressing more feminine, I don’t know that I’d be able to sing in front of a crowd. Besides, I would have to ditch all your hard work on the hologram, and...” She trails off, eyebrows drawing together.

Sayaka glances away for just a moment before her encouraging smile returns. “Well, one step at a time. The outfits are a good place to start.”



"Honestly, I don't know if I can wear such flashy outfits either. They're kind of... attention-grabbing."

"It's okay if you don't want to, but always remember that AE-chan is you, Chihiro. She always has been. Just with more confidence." Sayaka smiles brilliantly, her eyes shining. "We designed those outfits together because you like them, didn't we?"

"You're right," Chihiro responds. "Maybe not yet, but... I'd like to wear them someday. And, um. Thank you. For everything."

"Of course! Just promise me you'll let yourself wear something you feel cute in someday, alright?"

Chihiro returns Sayaka's smile, just as bright. "I promise."





B
PINTELLO

RETURN TO SENDER

WRITTEN BY: DEUS
ILLUSTRATED BY: ARIES
PIXEL ART BY: PANCAKEMO

Chihiro Fujisaki to me

1 April 2011 17:35

Dear Dad,

Well, Hope's Peak Academy is officially my new home. My first day of class went well enough. Most of my classmates have really strong personalities, but I think I can get along with a couple of them. I definitely stand out as the smallest student in class, but at least nobody was mean about it. I wish I could have made more of an impression, but I got so nervous whenever people approached me... There's a few athletes I'd like to become friends with, but I'm not sure if I can...

At least the school has amazing programming resources! The data processing room on the fourth floor is filled with so many new, high-power machines. I could make progress on my contract work at least twice as fast here! There's also a lot of workout equipment in the locker rooms... Maybe I can become stronger here. I might as well use all the resources the school has, right?

I hope you and Mom are doing well. Talk to you again soon!

-Chihiro

[Reply](#) [Forward](#)

[« Back to Inbox](#)

Chihiro Fujisaki to me

12 November 2012 16:23

Dear Dad,

I did it! I was able to tell everyone my secret! It's such a weight off my shoulders. I already got my new uniform, so here's a couple pictures of me in it! The second one's from when the whole class went sightseeing at a Buddhist temple together. I grabbed some snacks with Makoto and Aoi while we were out that day. By the way, Aoi's going to start giving me swim lessons next semester!

I'm really glad I came to this school! I couldn't ask for better friends to help me break out of my shell. I especially have Mondo to thank for keeping my secret while training me. I feel like I can really live my life to the fullest now!

Sorry for the short email, but I just wanted to give you a quick update! We're all going to go see a movie together now. I'll write you again soon!

-Chihiro

[Reply](#) [Forward](#)



newuniform.jpeg



classtrip_051.jpeg

Dear Dad,

Hope's Peak isn't a school, it's a death trap! I arrived for my first day, and a mechanical teddy bear called Monokuma told us he was the headmaster and that the only way to leave is to kill someone else! There's no way to escape. Even the Ultimate Martial Artist, the strongest person alive, can't unscrew the metal plates on the windows. I wish I was strong enough to help...

But luckily, my computer in my dorm room still has a limited connection! So at least I can write to you. I'm not sure if it's strong enough to actually send and receive emails, but I at least want to try. If you get this, please reply! I hope you and Mom are doing better at home than we are here.

-Chihiro

[Reply](#) [Forward](#)[« Back to Inbox](#)

Chihiro Fujisaki to me

4 April 2011 8:50

Dad!!! Mom!!! Are you okay? Monokuma just showed us a terrible video, but I don't want to believe it! It has to be CGI or something, right? You can't be dead! Even if you haven't responded yet, I want to believe you two are alive! Please, promise you'll answer this email! The network here might not let it through immediately, but I'm already thinking of ways to bypass all the security measures!

Please, answer me!

Chihiro Fujisaki to me

5 April 2011 0:07

Dad, I don't know if I can take this. It's terrible. Leon Kuwata killed Sayaka Maizono, and at the end of the class trial, the rest of us killed Leon! I don't care if Monokuma executed him, WE still voted! Now all of us are killers, but no one gets to leave!

I'm not strong enough to deal with this. I wanna come home! I wanna be with you and Mom! I tried to tell myself there was no way anyone would commit murder because of Monokuma's videos, but I was so wrong. I can't take it! I should never have come to this school. We're all going to die here!

-Chihiro

Chihiro Fujisaki to me

5 February 2013 9:59

Dear Dad,

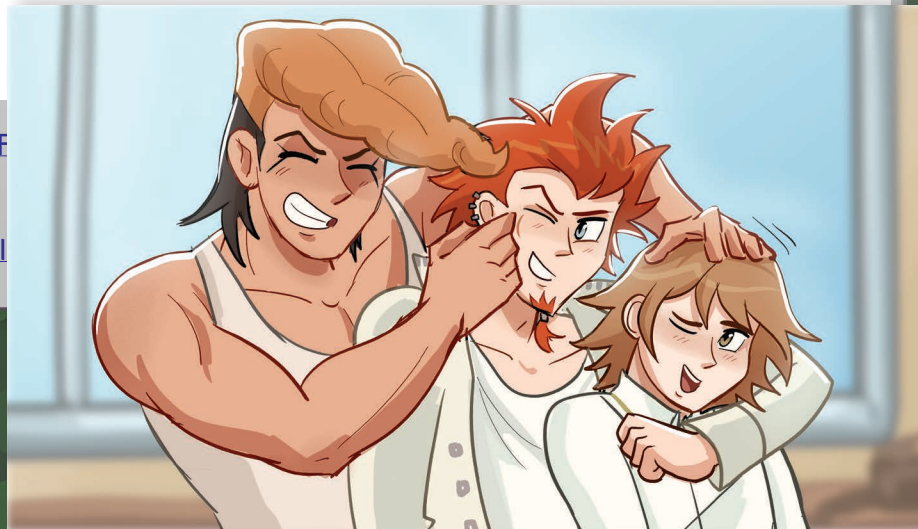
If the situation's as bad at home as it is here in Tokyo, you already know that the world is a total disaster. But don't worry, Headmaster Kirigiri has a plan to keep me and my classmates safe: we'll stay inside Hope's Peak Academy indefinitely. Tomorrow, we'll start sealing the school from the inside, and the building is already stocked with everything we need to live the rest of our lives here. The headmaster thinks we can wait out this apocalypse and rebuild the world with hope, but to tell the truth...I'm not so sure. But at the very least, it won't be lonely here.

I miss you and Mom a lot. Please stay safe out there! I hope that one day, we can meet again, and I can introduce you to the wonderful friends I've made here at Hope's Peak. For now, here's a picture of me with my best friends Mondo and Leon; we couldn't seem more different, but we get along great!

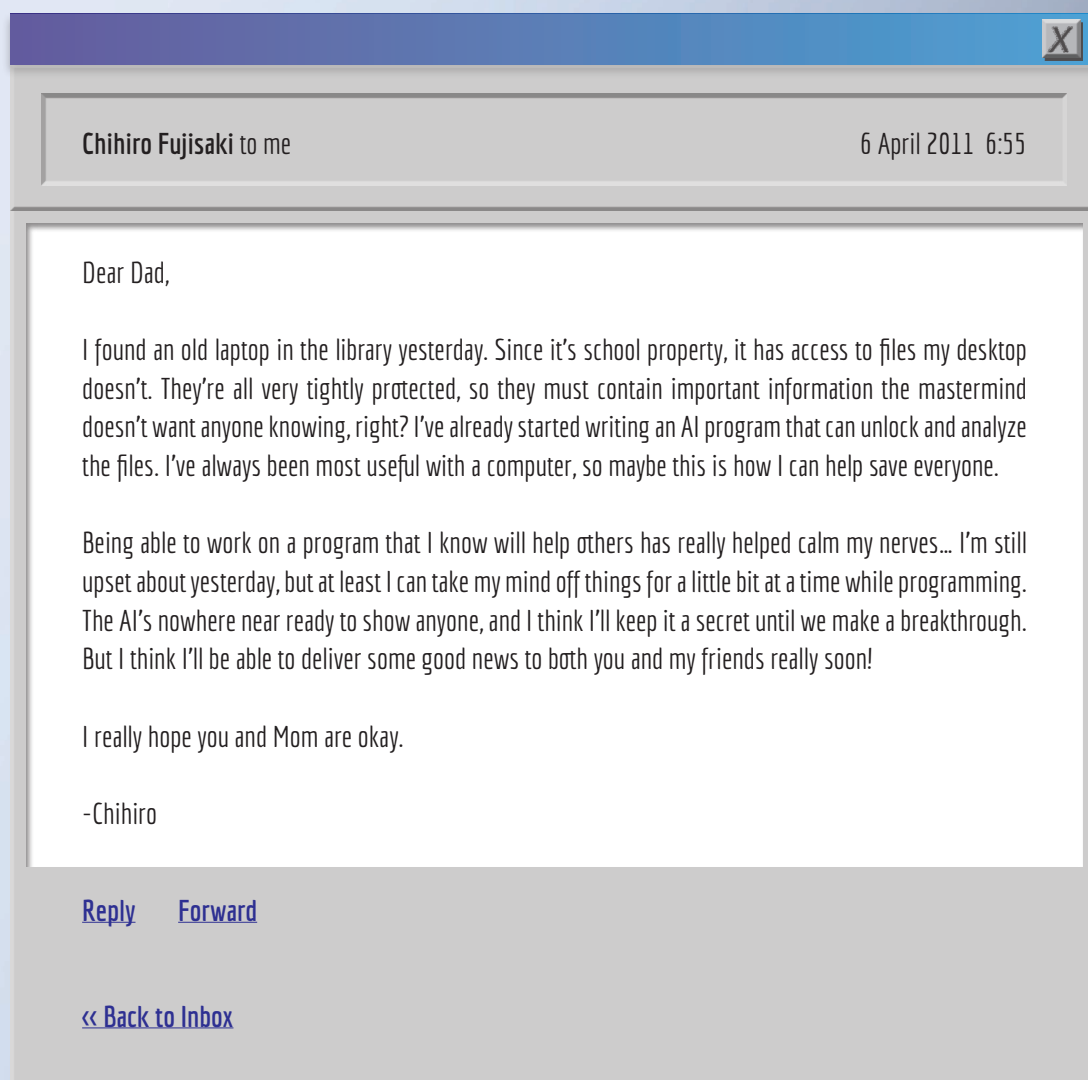
Please don't worry about me. I know I'll be safe as long as I'm inside the school. Plus, as long as we have an Internet connection, we'll be able to send emails! I'll try to send you regular updates, so you'll know how I'm doing. And even if we lose the connection... I'll keep writing to you, just in case.

I love you, and tell Mom I love her, too. Please, *please* stay safe out there.

Your son,
Chihiro



chihiromondoleon_01.jpeg



Chihiro Fujisaki to me

6 April 2011 6:55

Dear Dad,

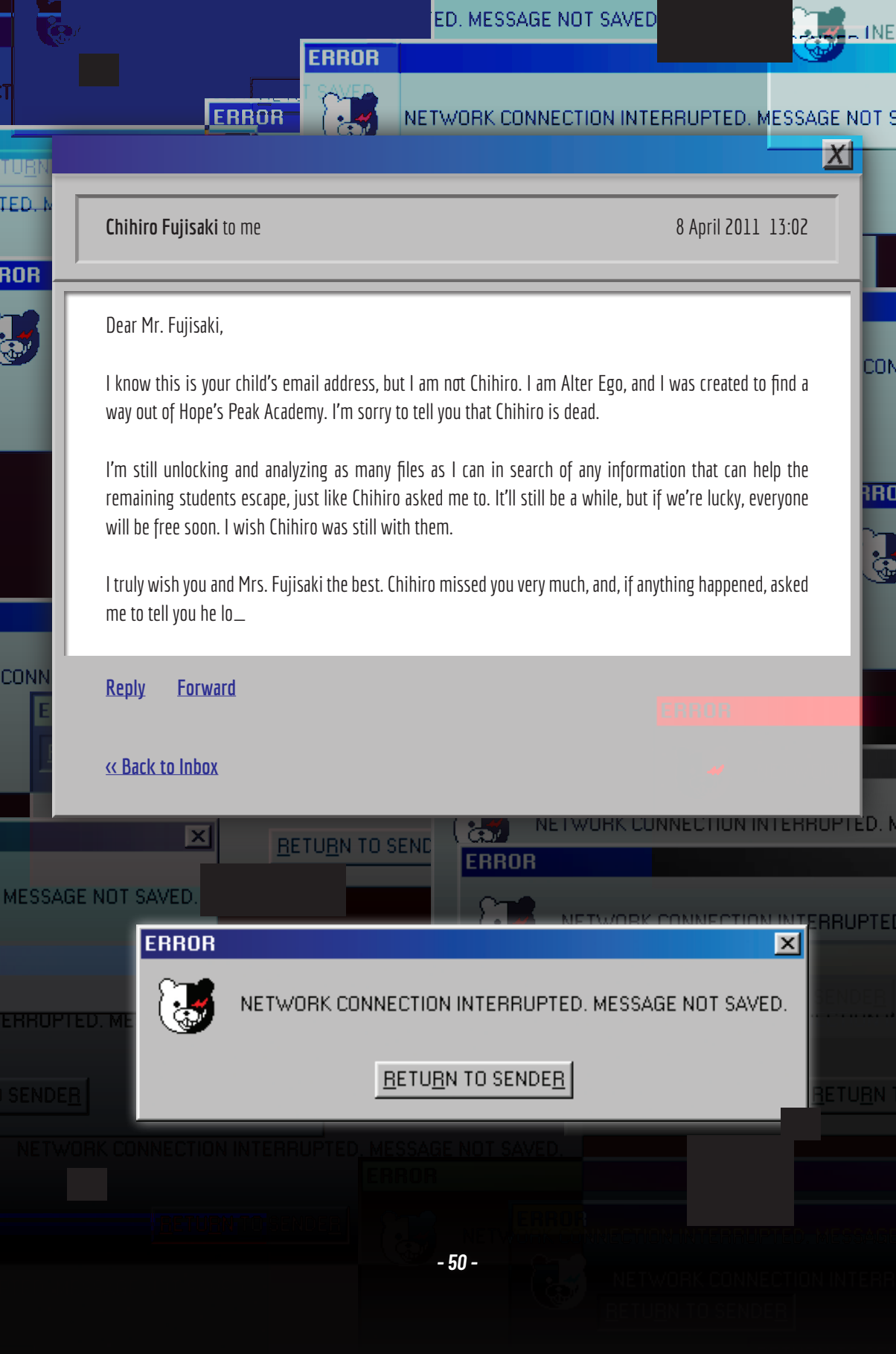
Monokuma gave us another "motive" today. He knows everyone's deepest secrets...including mine. Telling everyone my secret was the furthest thing from my mind in this situation, but I'm afraid of what my friends would think if they found out from Monokuma...

He always says things in the worst possible way! I don't think I'd be able to take it if HE was the one to tell everybody...

So I've decided I won't let him use it against me. I'll get strong enough to tell everyone on my own terms! I don't know how long I'll be stuck in this school, but I might as well use every resource it has, including with the locker room equipment. I've already asked one of my classmates to meet with me to start training me tonight! It'll probably shock him when I enter the boys' locker room, but I believe he's a good guy. He believes in keeping promises between men no matter what, and since I'm a man, he'll keep mine until I'm ready to tell everyone else!

I'm actually really excited for tonight. I want to change, and I'll make it happen! The next time I see you and Mom, I'll be stronger than ever. I know you'll be proud of me!

-Chihiro

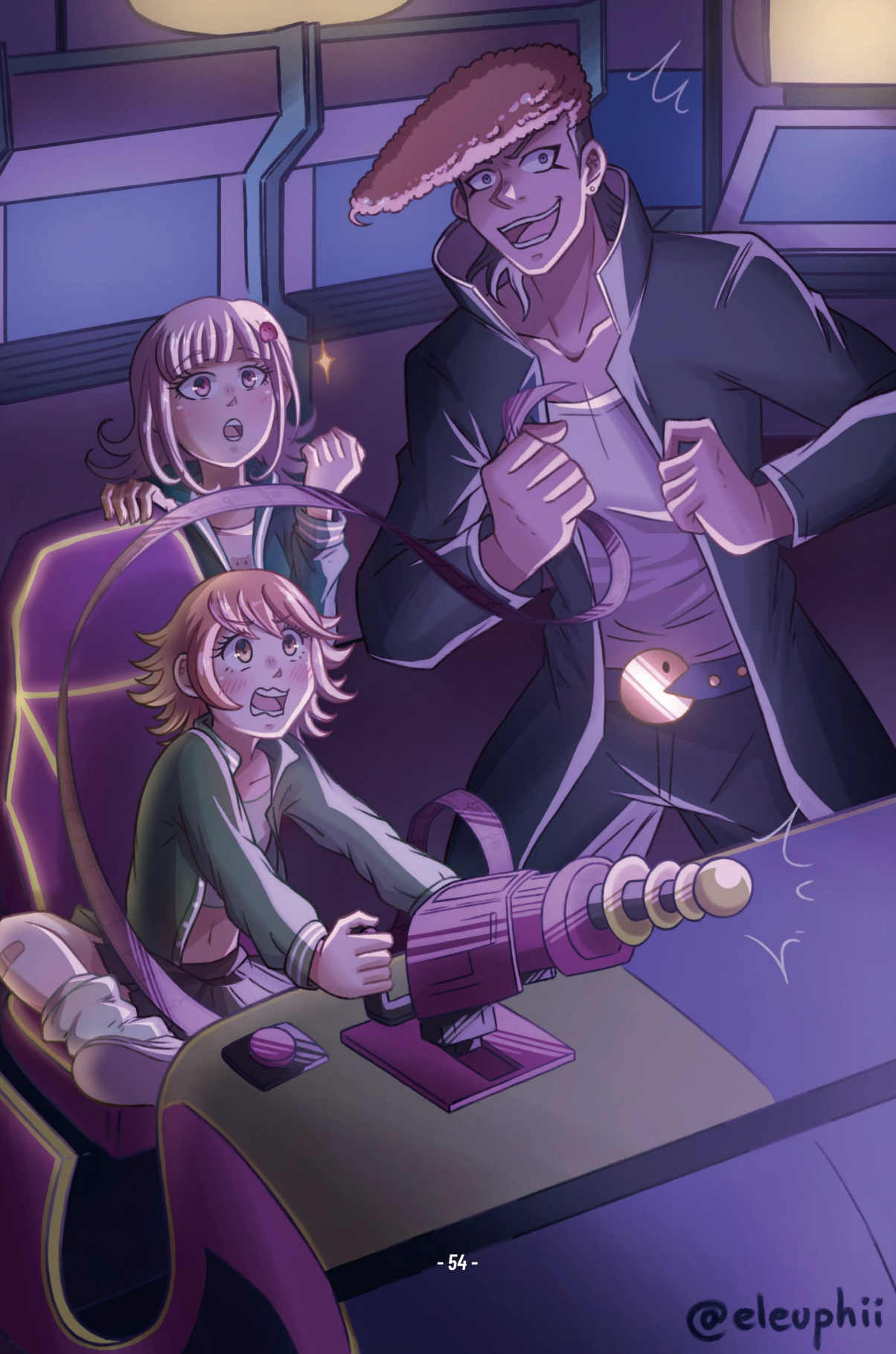




Hina
Can't wait to
hang!!! >v<

Stay Strong!! Get
that room Clean dude
Mondo

TAKA
Mondo and I
will arrive in
one hour.-TAKA



ADVANCEMENT OF OURSELVES

WRITTEN BY: ROSE

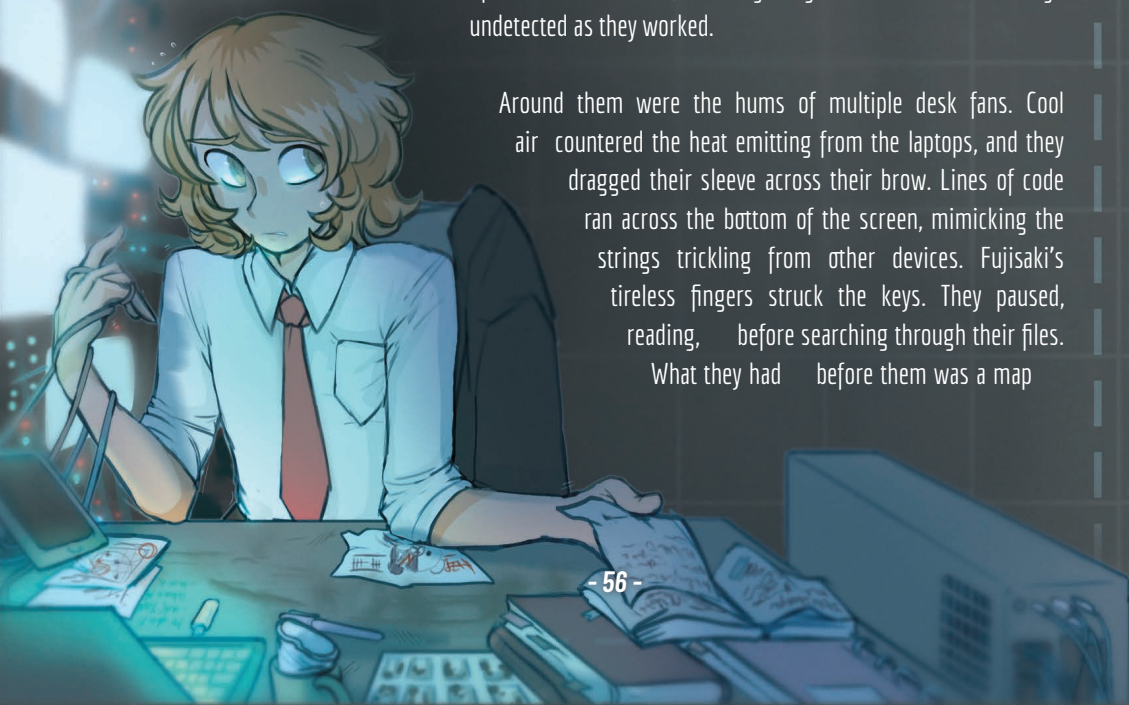
ILLUSTRATED BY: TWINKLE

As a member of the Future Foundation, Fujisaki was sympathetic to the organization's goals. They, too, wished for the eradication of despair across the globe. But as a member of Kirigiri's division, the methods employed by her branch and the others differed in how to pursue such eradication.

Never one to believe in hostile punishment or death penalties, Fujisaki was like Naegi and Kirigiri, hoping for rehabilitation, particularly for the upperclassmen manipulated by Enoshima. Such as the poor students of the Reserve Course and their treasured classmates lost to the killing game, the Remnants of Despair were Enoshima's victims, and Fujisaki's duty was to locate them for, in Naegi's words, "capture and care."

Their office was illuminated by the sickly blue hue of numerous laptop computers. Fujisaki personally constructed them, untraceable by hackers and agents within the Future Foundation. The former Super High School Level Programmer believed privacy was important above all else, ensuring Naegi's rescue mission would go undetected as they worked.

Around them were the hums of multiple desk fans. Cool air countered the heat emitting from the laptops, and they dragged their sleeve across their brow. Lines of code ran across the bottom of the screen, mimicking the strings trickling from other devices. Fujisaki's tireless fingers struck the keys. They paused, reading, before searching through their files. What they had before them was a map



pinned with coordinates. They were potential locations of Remnants of Despair, marked with names and hideouts, and as Fujisaki leaned closer, ignoring the hunch in their back, they squinted at the brightly lit, blinking dot they had inserted atop another spot. It was just south of Okinawa, a mechanical wasteland Souda claimed as his kingdom, and with trackers personally set by Fujisaki on a job mere weeks ago, they just received fortunate tidings: movement was detected. Souda had returned.

They exhaled a breath clenched in their chest. Kirigiri needed to know immediately for Naegi and Ishimaru to reach Souda. Reaching for another, smaller tablet, they pressed their thumb across the screen and waited for it to turn on. But when a dead battery symbol blinked to life, their shoulders slumped, and they groaned, fiddling through a mess of cords for a viable charger.

"Oh, where did I-? Is that-? No, that's being used. I must have one more around here some-!"

They froze. Their hand was trapped in a mess of wires. Light filtered in through a crack in the door. The hinges hadn't squeaked, and no one had knocked. And yet, as the fluorescent light shined a thin line no larger than their arm, they already knew eyes were focused on them as a figure stepped into that illuminated strand.

Fujisaki jerked upright, dragging and twisting their fingers through cords. Their hand slid across the power button of their laptop, only to hesitate. Fujisaki let out an involuntary hum, catching their breath as the door quietly opened, pushed by a hand covered in leather.

Ikusaba stared at them. She wore her neutral mask, as expressionless as always. Although Fujisaki read codes with ease, she was an enigma. Ikusaba stepped into the room, the light catching on her bulky tracking bracelet, which she had been outfitted with the moment the Vice Chairman accepted her into the Future Foundation. Fujisaki had once offered to make a few *adjustments* to the cumbersome accessory, but Kirigiri and Ikusaba declined. The former was forced to concede Ikusaba's limited freedom for Ikusaba to keep her head, so long as she continued providing information regarding the despairing operatives. Ikusaba had merely shaken her head, insisting wearing the bracelet would keep unwanted attention on her, rather than the survivors collectively.

Still, Fujisaki sighed at her prolonged silence. "Ikusaba-san, you startled me. Please knock next time," they said, but just as they noticed the missing cord curled around the table leg, they were dumbfounded by



Ikusaba's abrupt question.
"What time is it?"

Her blunt, even tone cut them like the tip of a knife. It was the kind of query that hardly suited Ikusaba. She was a soldier, and punctuality was key in a warzone.

"What? Um, it's—" They flicked their gaze to the alarm clock stationed on their desk. "—7:30 on the dot."

Ikusaba tilted her head forward, and she boldly stepped into the dark haze of their office. "A.M. or P.M.?" she asked, though it sounded more like an ultimatum.

The answer was obvious. The last time Fujisaki checked the clock, they were about to leave the room for a mild dinner. When they returned, it was precisely 6:15 P.M. Barely an hour had passed, and they were about to insist upon it when their gaze caught an unwanted letter.

Fujisaki realized it was, cruelly, 7:30 A.M.

Upon the true time dawning on them, the weight of their inadvertent all-nighter slammed them. Shades of violet marred underneath their stinging eyes. Through the windows of the monitors, Fujisaki watched their reflections drag their forefingers across their puffy eyes. So entrenched in their work, Fujisaki had failed to keep track of the hours slipping like sands in an hourglass.

A deep groan worked its way out of their dry, aching throat. They finally admitted defeat.

Ikusaba tutted. She marched toward Fujisaki and cupped their wrist. Her grip was firm, yet gentle as she tugged Fujisaki out of their seat, and the pull was enough for their legs to wobble.

Having sat for literal hours, it was as if the muscles in their lower body had turned to jelly. They stumbled as Ikusaba coaxed them into the corridor, groaning under their breath. Fujisaki squinted at the hall lights, which were somehow brighter than their monitors. Their feet dragged toward the communal break room as Ikusaba guided them.

As the faint scent of cinnamon and tea began drifting into the hallway, it began to feel like a real morning.

Ikusaba released them and strutted toward the adjacent kitchenette, sparing the other occupant of the room a nod. Fujisaki rubbed their eyes, compelled by the coaxing scent to approach a fellow survivor and friend at the center table. Although the sky, visible through windows covered in bulletproof panes, was still draped in a shade of scarlet, Fujisaki was relieved to notice stray rays of sunlight piercing through the clouds and shining onto the ravaged world.

Celestia gingerly sipped her tea and sighed. As usual, she had her tea prepared bright and early, complimenting the modest spread of breakfast pastries and sliced fruit set across the table. She set her cup on the coaster and tilted her head, welcoming their presence as they sat down.

"Ah, Fujisaki-san, good morning. It seems you've seen better days," she said, pouring them a cup.

Her mild teasing brought a small smile to Fujisaki's face. Thanking her as they accepted the beverage, they appreciated the warmth pressing into their palms. "You can say that again. I didn't realize I was working through the night," they replied, glancing at the drink. "This isn't Royal Milk Tea. Is it—oh, going by the deep green color—is it Matcha? It looks good."

She nodded. "And tastes even better with a hint of cinnamon. It serves as a nice tea to drink when one needs to be alert in the morning."

Plates and cutlery clinked behind them. Fujisaki assumed Ikusaba was making herself food and sipped their tea. They hummed, the taste reminding them of coffee with a mild, earthier undertone. "It really is as good as it looks," they exclaimed, a surge of energy racing through them, almost expelling the lethargy sunken into their bones.

"Help yourself to another cup," Celestia offered with a good-natured giggle, and her gaze drifted behind Fujisaki. "Ikusaba-san is about ready to join us with what's yours."

Reaching for the teapot, they were about to oblige when a plate smacked down on the table. Fujisaki winced, their fingers jolting away as if they had grazed a hot stove. Ikusaba withdrew her arm, biting her lip at her excessive force. Mumbling an apology, she sat with a second plate, consisting of lightly buttered toast and a bowl of oatmeal that resembled gruel.

Fujisaki was about to comment, worried about the lack of color of her oatmeal, when Ikusaba beat them to the punch.



"You were working hard all night, so I hope that suffices," she remarked, and she nibbled on her toast, her attention shifting to the window.

Their eyes drifted to the first plate Ikusaba had thrust down, realizing it had been placed in front of them. Two unbuttered pieces of toast had their crusts slightly burnt. A few packets of grape jelly were nestled on the plate's rim, along with a plastic knife. To their pleasant surprise, the small bowl of oatmeal, though a tad watery, was not at all gray, and added blueberries provided delightful pops of color.

It hardly took a mind as brilliant as theirs to comprehend Ikusaba had prepared them breakfast. They stared at each other, though it was Ikusaba who broke first. She continued glancing between Fujisaki and Celestia, who busied herself with an almond croissant, her grin bordering on mischievous.

Piecing information together was as easy as writing the necessary code. It was simple for Fujisaki to understand the gesture, as kind and innocent as it was. Ikusaba was someone who had lived generously for someone who monopolized her free will. The mastermind pulling the strings, thriving off their chaotic misery, enforced her will over her sister's throughout her entire life.

It took Ikusaba great courage to defect from her sister. It had taken Fujisaki the same courage to believe in Naegi and agree to leave the cruel comforts of Hope's Peak Academy. The sentiment was shared among the survivors, compelled by Naegi's assertion to believe in hope, no matter how uncertain. When Ikusaba reached out to them, they had pulled her away from the mastermind, who raged and ranted, only to perish in the throes of ecstatic agony. She was someone incomprehensible to Fujisaki, but Ikusaba, who strove to make amends and rectify her countless transgressions, was willing to live in the future with everyone.

Fujisaki smiled. The steps they were both taking toward change were apparent. Even if they made their mistakes, or lapsed into old habits, Fujisaki felt another rush of inspiration, as if taking another sip of their Matcha tea.

Ikusaba's shoulder hunched. "What? Did I overstep?" she asked, a hint of a demand in her tone.

"Not at all. Thank you, Ikusaba-san. You've-" They dipped their spoon into the oatmeal, scooping up a generous helping with an abundance of blueberries. "-Actually, we've all really started coming into our own, haven't we?"

Ikusaba teased the split ends of her hair, and the slight, sheepish smile given in return was enough for Fujisaki to truly enjoy the tang of the blueberries.

Celestia peered over to the hallway, raising her hand in a slight wave. Immediately, the boisterous,

booming voice of Ishimaru filled the room. As he marched inside, Naegi and Kirigiri in tow, Fujisaki wondered how he was always exuberant in the morning.

"Hello, everyone! Let's work hard to make this day as excellent as yesterday! May I pour myself a cup of tea, Celes-kun?"

"Help yourself. There's enough for seconds, too."

Naegi beamed, Kirigiri quietly taking the spot next to Ikusaba. He still shone with the same determination he had that inspired Fujisaki.

"It's great seeing everyone eating together. Those croissants look tasty."

Kirigiri nodded, gathering a few apple slices on her tiny plate. "Agreed. Food tastes better among friends."

Fujisaki caught Ikusaba's smile, albeit reflected in the surface of her bangle. There were still arduous endeavors ahead, with Remnants to rescue and rehabilitate. But among their friends, surrounded by serenity and pleasant chatter, they had never felt more content, the hope instilled within them as bright as sunlight glittering on the world they strove to save.









HEARTS AND FLOWERS

WRITTEN BY: HEDGE
ILLUSTRATED BY: CAEL

Sports Day was never going to be Chihiro's favorite festival, but the version at Hope's Peak was better than any they'd been to before. It was hard to worry that people were judging their poor performance when there were prospective Olympians to watch instead. Anyone would look bad running a race against Aoi.



Now it was over, and Chihiro had snuck back to the classroom to change. It was a little awkward, sure, but still better than wearing their bloomers home.



Maybe next year they could be better. They'd be stronger, and they'd do better in the events, and then surely they'd be ready to wear the boys' uniform. That was what they were supposed to do, after all. They'd finally be normal, and no one would look at them twice for changing with the rest of the boys.

The sound of a knock made them start. They gave a quiet yelp, which hopefully wouldn't be audible through the door. "Um. Yes?"

"I've come to retrieve a bag for Celeste," Sakura said. "Apparently, she will simply faint if asked to take another step." There was a quiet huff of amusement, which meant the door really wasn't doing much to muffle sound. Great.

Oblivious to Chihiro's exasperation, Sakura continued, "May I come in?"

"Oh! Yeah, that's fine." Chihiro smoothed out their skirt so it was less obvious they'd been staring into space instead of getting dressed.

Sakura opened the door, made her way easily to Celeste's desk, and pulled a red purse from inside. She

straightened, but made no move to leave. Oh god, this was it, wasn't it? She was going to ask why Chihiro was here instead of changing with the girls, and Chihiro wasn't going to have a good answer. Not one that Sakura would like, at least.



"You did well today," Sakura said. "Leading your team in the relay, that is."

"I didn't really do much." Chihiro forced a laugh. "I think everyone else just wanted to make sure they had time to catch up after I slowed them down."

"That's not what I saw," Sakura said, voice firm.

Chihiro still didn't agree, but they didn't have the courage to argue when she said it like that, and anyway, it was nice to think that they'd contributed something.

They stood in silence for several long seconds. Sakura just kept looking at them, like she knew something and was just waiting for them to admit it. It wasn't fair that she could be that strong and that sharp.

It was that thought that finally led them to blurt out, "So. You're a girl, right?"

Sakura sighed. "I am."



Immediately, Chihiro winced. "Yeah, no, obviously. I'm sorry, that was dumb. I just wanted to say that I think you're really impressive. I mean, you're so strong, but you're also still feminine? It's nice to see, is all."

Sakura blinked, as if taken aback but trying not to show it. Chihiro didn't know why; it was just them, after all. Whatever the reason, she shook it off quickly, though a strange light remained in her eyes. "I suspect most would disagree with that description of me."

"Then they're wrong," Chihiro said. "You're so gentle, and compassionate, and pretty. Even your name is such a classic girls' name."

Sakura's lip quirked. "That is kind of you to say. Though I must admit, I never expected to receive such a compliment from you. It seems much more natural for it to be the other way around."

Chihiro froze.

Sakura caught their hesitation, of course. "I don't know what I said, but I apologize. I didn't mean to make you uncomfortable."

"No, no, you're fine!" It was a silly thing to let get to them. "It took a lot of work for me to be comfortable dressing like this. It's just... sometimes I wonder if that's a good thing."

"Do you not want to be seen as feminine?" Sakura's voice was carefully even.

"I don't know," Chihiro said. It felt like a cop out, but it was the truest answer they had. "It's not that I dislike it, exactly. It's just that



sometimes, I'm afraid that I'm accepting my own weakness instead of doing anything about it."

It was a stupid thing to say, as Chihiro realized the instant the words were out of their mouth. Sure, Sakura was kind and understanding and easy to talk to, but she would definitely have questions. That didn't sound like something a girl would say, after all. And Chihiro didn't want to lie to her, not when she was being so nice, but Sakura was so strong that she'd definitely look down on them if she knew how weak they were—

Sakura's gaze was distant as she shook her head. "In my experience, I have found that staying true to yourself in the face of adversity is the mark of true strength."

"But what if I'm not being myself?" The words burst free almost without Chihiro's permission. "What if I'm just taking the easy way out?"

Sakura took a moment to weigh her words. "I can't answer that question for you," she said at last, "but it seems to me that if it's something you put effort into achieving, it can hardly be described as the easy way out."

That was... Chihiro hadn't thought of it that way before. It wasn't as if they were putting on makeup or anything really complicated like that, but...

Sakura kept talking, as if she hadn't already given Chihiro more to think about than they could deal with in a week. "This isn't to say that you should continue presenting in a fashion that you truly don't like. It is your life to live and your decision to make. It is, however, worth considering whether your motivations remain what they were." She looked away. "Though, for what it is worth, I like you as you are now."

Hey! Whoa! Chihiro would really like a warning before hearing that from one of the coolest people they knew. "Um," they said, and hoped they didn't sound close to tears. "Thank you. That means a lot."

Sakura kept looking at the wall, not meeting Chihiro's eyes. This was exactly what they were talking about—Sakura was a very cute girl, and anyone who thought otherwise was simply wrong. "Any time." She shook her head. "Though perhaps not right now, as Makoto said he'd wait for me. I shouldn't keep him."



"Oh! Yeah, of course." And, a little too late, "Have a good evening!"

Sakura nodded and took her leave. Chihiro was selfishly kind of glad for that—they didn't think they could handle any more of this conversation, no matter how nice Sakura was being.

Of course, being alone meant that they had time to think, so it was really a mixed blessing. Because the thing was, they still didn't want to wear the boys' uniform. They liked their skirt, liked the softer curves of the girls' jacket and the way their socks hit their thigh. How pathetic was that?



Sakura liked her uniform, too, and she was the strongest person Chihiro knew. And Chihiro didn't know how Mukuro felt about her uniform, but she still wore it, and so did Peko in the year above them. Any one of them could probably snap someone who told them they were weak for it in half.

Of course, they were all actually girls. It was different for them. They weren't running away, they were just doing what came naturally. They were allowed to be feminine.

Chihiro might have left it at that, if it weren't for how surprised Sakura had been when they'd called her feminine. They'd heard their classmates calling her Ogre. She knew how people saw her, and even so, it meant something to her to be seen as a girl. Like it was worthwhile in its own right, an honor instead of a weakness.

Chihiro didn't know if it could be that for them. Most days, putting on their uniform felt like running away. But maybe they could change that without having to change their entire personality.

It was an overwhelming idea, in no small part for how much they wanted it.

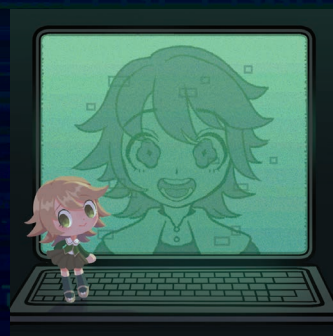
It wasn't going to happen in an afternoon, though, and definitely not standing in an empty classroom. It was well past time for them to head home.



MERCH GALLERY



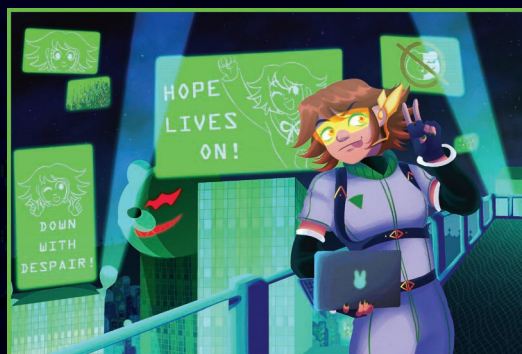
Square button + sticker by Quinn



Notepad by Wrabbit



Phone wallpaper + print by Vio



Double sided acrylic charm + icons by Filth



Sticker sheet by Mark



Paper doll by Alex



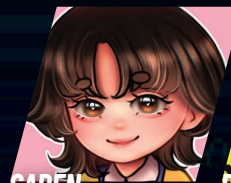
Collector's cards + enamel pin by Zoé



Print + acrylic standee by Em

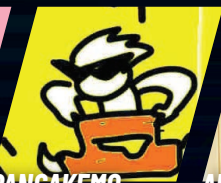


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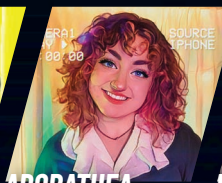
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caeryn
caerynart



PANKAKEMO

pancakemolybdenum



ADORATHEA

adorathea
adorathea
adorathea



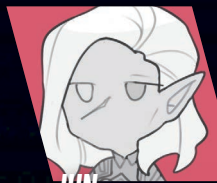
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Zacuraptor
milyoasis



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KOSMICAL
kosmical



JUN

doulbedo
juusbox



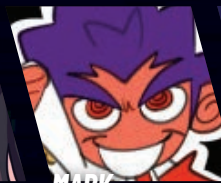
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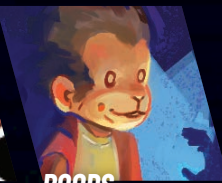
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MARK

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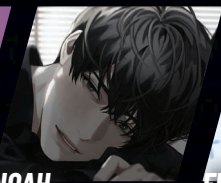
POODS

poodpoopsie
PoodPoopsie



GLOWNARY

glownary
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NOAH

maraschinoahx
Maraschinoahx



FILTH

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ARIES

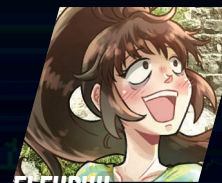
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ALEX

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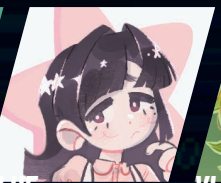
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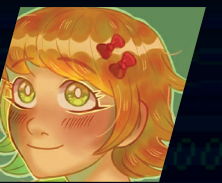
ROSE

KibaSniper
kibasnipr111
KibaSniper



BLUE

Blueofthesunset
Blueofthesunset
Blueofthesunset



VI

alexvidraws
alexvidraws
alexvidraws



ALERANE

caeboa
caeboa
caeboa



ZOE

puppy.au.lait
puppyaulait



EM

graamkraken
graamkraken



QUINN

quinnartbox
quinn-art-box



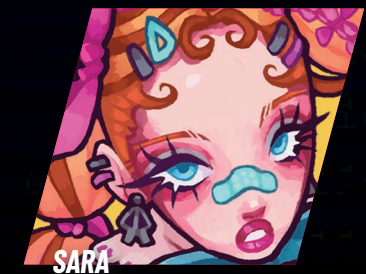
VIO

villainartist
villainxartist
villainartist



HEDGE

candidateofloyalty
Kalcifer



SARA

COVER ART

arikabooboo
Arikabooboo

mod TEAM



LAV

ORGANIZATION +
FORMATTING MOD

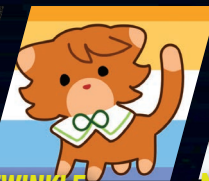
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AMADEUS

FINANCE + WRITING
MOD

amadeus__rex
AmadeusRex



TWINKLE

ART MOD

twinklelitchii
TwinkleLitchii



MIN

ART + GRAPHICS MOD

sillyminny
sillyminny
sillyminny



BRYNN

SOCIAL MEDIA MOD

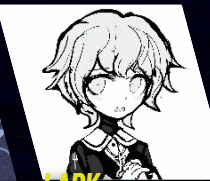
b.urrotello
burrotello
burrotello



WRABBIT

PRODUCTION +
SHIPPING MOD

thewrabbithole
graywabbit



LARK

WRITING MOD

laruaqui

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Thank you so much for purchasing "Hello World! A Chihiro Fujisaki Fanzine". I think I speak for all of us when I say I hope you enjoyed reading this as much as we enjoyed creating this! Chihiro will always be such a special character to me, and I've loved them since the moment I met them. It's so heartening to know that others love Chihiro just as much as I do!

With all the love in my heart for DR & Chihiro fans, Ezra Psychiccupid!

P.S. No, seriously, did y'all take in all of this incredible art and these amazing fics? I'm seriously still fanboying over this entire zine even tho I'm in it! It's truly been an honor to not only get to create a piece for my favorite character, but be *invited* to do so! And it's all thanks to you, the supporters, that we get to create fun projects like this one! Love ya lots!!



HELLO WORLD was such a great experience, hard to believe it's been over a year since my inclusion in the zine! I feel blessed and so grateful for the whole team to have trusted me, and to have worked with wonderful contributors who made one of the best projects for one of my favorite characters, doing them justice with this passion project. And YOU Readers, thank you for the support, please enjoy the labor of our love for Chihiro Fujisaki (and Alter Ego).

Until next time! - Twinkle

Thank you!



THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT
♥ CAERYN



@amadeus__rex

Thank you for your support!

Chihiro was the first Danganronpa character I ever "met" through seeing posts online, so they're like an old friend to me. It's wonderful to know they're still so loved more than 10 years later!

-Amadeus





